

Supplementary information for prospective arts and humanities Future Leaders Fellowship (FLF) applicants

This document features some of the most frequently asked questions from both researchers and research office staff from the arts and humanities community, regarding the UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships scheme (FLF). The guidance has been compiled with insights from arts and humanities FLF award holders, FLF core panel members, the arts and humanities community and UKRI/AHRC staff. This document should be read in conjunction with the Future Leaders Fellowship Guidance Documents, which can be found [here](#).

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What are the criteria for an arts and humanities Early Career Researcher (ECR) within the Future Leaders Fellowships scheme (FLF)?

The ECR criteria for the FLF scheme is intentionally flexible, as it recognises individuals have different career paths. The FLF scheme places the responsibility on you, the fellowship applicant, to express in your application how you feel you meet the ECR criteria and why this funding scheme, in particular, will help you transition to or, as is more likely in the arts and humanities, continue to establish your independence. There is no time-based criteria and individuals from the arts and humanities community who have been awarded an FLF project, include fellows of varying periods from the completion of their PhD or first academic appointment. The scheme is also open to individuals who have already established their independence in one field and are using the FLF project as an opportunity to change direction and specialise in a completely different field. Fellowships can also be used to transition back into a research career following a period in industry, the public or third sector. The scheme also accommodates individuals returning to work e.g. following a career break.

What does leadership mean/look like for the arts and humanities community?

You should approach leadership by considering what your attributes and experience are, as a key player in your field, as an influencer, networker, advisor and a collaborator. Consider how these skills can extend and expand your career and how the scheme can facilitate your development. The emphasis of the FLF scheme is on you, as the fellow, and what you can do to break new ground, make a significant contribution to your field, and sustain this contribution over the longer term. The scale of the FLF scheme enables the development of team working and an aspect of leadership will be to ensure your team receive the support and training they need to both contribute to your research programme and to develop their own careers.

The types of activity that individuals may wish to pursue will vary greatly from field to field. They will be relevant to your aspirations, your career stage, your programme of research and the impact activities you propose. In developing your research and development programme, you need to ensure you present a coherent and compelling package of activity. It might include the following:

- fostering wider impact from your research
- developing emerging research areas, methods or approaches
- fostering interdisciplinary research
- encouraging new research collaborations and partnerships
- inspiring creativity in other researchers
- providing intellectual leadership
- developing new skills, e.g. public or policy engagement
- building new research networks
- building academic and non-academic relationships
- working with international academic and non-academic partners and audiences.

What does innovation mean/look like for the arts and humanities community?

This scheme is a chance to articulate the reach and power of the arts and humanities. The scheme allows you to articulate a compelling, impactful and coherent research vision. It will enable you to think 'bigger': beyond the standard timescales of many other funded schemes available to arts and humanities researchers. The FLF scheme allows for a high risk, high gain approach. The project must be robust and well-argued but, it should be ambitious and aim to change the field through long-term and sustained engagement that can be furthered through close collaboration.

Does my arts and humanities project need to be interdisciplinary?

There is no requirement for a project to be interdisciplinary. The project must be innovative and should allow you, the fellow, to develop your potential, beyond what is possible through a smaller grant. If the research is innovative and will contribute new findings or knowledge to the field, it does not matter if it is the result of research in a single discipline.

Will an arts and humanities proposal be less competitive if it is requesting less than £500k?

The FLF scheme has no minimum or maximum funding limit; so far, the FLF Scheme has funded fellowships ranging from £300,000 to over £2million and there is no preference for lower or higher costed proposals. Projects are assessed using the [assessment criteria](#), which includes value for money. You should request the funding that is needed to undertake the work and ensure that you make the case for this level of funding. It is likely that arts and humanities programmes will require less funding as they may not need expensive equipment, large teams, or have a significant consumables budget. It is also worth noting that applications are not compared to one another; they are assessed individually against the scheme's assessment criteria.

What level of host institutions support is required/desired?

Host organisations are key to supporting you, the fellow, in establishing or continuing to establish yourselves as a leader in your field. Hosts can support fellows through providing dedicated workspace, access to facilities/equipment/resources, training, mentoring and support in integrating the fellow within the activities of the host department. We recognise that the support which might be offered by an arts and humanities department or faculty may be different to that provided in STEM subjects and the key is ensuring the support offered is appropriate and its importance or benefit to you and your research programme is well-argued. Support from the host organisation must be tailored to your needs and should go beyond the generic support provided by institutions to ECRs. A generic statement of support from the host institution is not helpful for applicants.

A commitment to providing you, the fellow, with an open-ended UK based position to be taken up during or upon the completion of the fellowship, is required from the host institution. UKRI recognises that research/innovation employers differ in their employment policies and practices. An effective commitment to and support for fellows can therefore be achieved by several different means. For example, the path to an open-ended role may involve open advertisement – which is acceptable provided that this is for a position in the right subject area, at a suitable level, at the appropriate time and it would be expected that the fellow would be in a good position to attain the role.

How much detail is needed for the Outline stage and is it mandatory?

The outline stage is mandatory, and you cannot submit a full proposal without having submitted an outline. The outline stage allows the UKRI team to anticipate what proposals will be submitted in order to start planning peer reviewers and panel members. Full details of what should be included and information on the Je-S process can be found in Section 2 of the [Guidance for Applicants](#) document. The outline stage does not need to be overly detailed and it is recognised that there may be changes when the full proposal is submitted. Most importantly, your outline proposal is not assessed at any stage, it is solely for internal UKRI use.

Are FLF projects assessed by members of the arts and humanities community?

All applications are peer reviewed by subject experts in the relevant field. If your project falls solely in the arts and humanities, AHRC will be responsible for identifying experts within the field to peer

review the proposal. When identifying peer reviewers, AHRC draws on both the FLF peer review college and AHRC's own peer review college (PRC). If your FLF project is interdisciplinary and, for example, includes humanities and social sciences, both AHRC and ESRC will be responsible for ensuring all aspects of your project have been peer reviewed. This means that, on occasion, a proposal may receive comments from more than the recommended minimum of three peer reviewers.

You, the applicant, will be invited to respond to the peer review comments received (termed 'PI response'), further guidance on the PI response can be found [here](#). After the PI response stage, the proposal is sent to a sift panel. All research councils are asked to identify suitable experts to moderate the FLF proposals received. Sift panels are broad, with expert cross-disciplinary and cross-sector groups rather than narrow specialist disciplinary groups. Although we cannot guarantee there will be a panel member with expertise in your research area, there will be arts and humanities representation. The interview panel is tailored to the broad areas of research/ innovation to enable each applicant to be interviewed by a panel that includes an appropriate level of expertise to allow effective questioning of the proposed project. In writing your application or written response, or if invited to interview, it is worth bearing this in mind and ensuring the language you use is accessible.

Have any FLF projects that fall primarily within AHRC's remit been awarded?

A number of FLF projects that fall primarily within the arts and humanities remit have been awarded. For example, the project led by Dr Ruth Nugent focuses on burial and exhumation of church burials in Britain, since the 7th century CE. Dr Richard Moore's fellowship aims to develop a new account of the relationship between Theory of Mind (i.e. the ability to think about others' mental states), language and communication. Dr Moore's project falls within the arts and humanities whilst including aspects from other disciplines. A further two FLF projects, which primarily fall within the arts and humanities remit, are featured on YouTube; you can find out more about Dr Sadie Watson's FLF project [here](#) and Dr Fay Bound Alberti's project [here](#).

Given FLF is a UKRI-wide scheme are STEM projects more likely to be supported?

Every proposal is assessed independently against the [FLF assessment](#) criteria. If your application is scored highly by the sift panel, then by the interview panel, you will have the same chance of receiving funding as an applicant within a STEM discipline.

As an arts and humanities researcher, how do I go about identifying a suitable mentor?

Mentors should be identified based on the needs of yourself, the fellow, and the support you require to complete an FLF award successfully. If you are expanding your research into a new discipline, perhaps a mentor with expertise in the new discipline/research area, may be most appropriate. Alternatively, a mentor with experience of leading a large research project might be helpful if this will be a different way of working for you. You should select a mentor with the expertise/experience you believe would be most beneficial in supporting you to lead an FLF project. Once mentors have been identified, we would advise you to have a discussion with the proposed mentor, outlining your expectations, e.g. frequency of support, specific support you need etc, to ensure the proposed mentor is happy with the proposed arrangements. When developing the FLF proposal, please ensure you detail why you believe this mentor is particularly suited to supporting you throughout the duration of the FLF project. It is important that the mentor has indicated their commitment to supporting you, and a letter of support should be included for any named mentors.

What are the key differences between an FLF project and an AHRC fellowship award? Whilst the UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship Scheme (FLF) and the [AHRC's Leadership Fellows Scheme](#), have similar aims, in terms of supporting the development of early career researchers, they differ considerably in scale, ambition and level of required host institution support. The UKRI FLF scheme, offers no minimum or maximum budget and four years funding, plus an additional three years of funding can be requested. The AHRC's Leadership Fellows Scheme (ECR Route) offers 6-24 months and has a limit of £250,000 (FEC).

In terms of institution support, both schemes require host organisations to support you, the fellow, in establishing or continuing to establish yourself as a leader in your field. Hosts can support fellows through providing dedicated workspace, access to facilities/equipment/resources, training, mentoring and support in integrating the fellow within the activities of the host department. Support from the host organisation must be tailored to the fellow's needs and should go beyond the generic support provided by institutions to ECRs. A generic statement of support from the host institution is not helpful for applicants.

The UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship Scheme requires a commitment from host institutions to provide the fellow an open-ended position to be taken up during or upon the completion of the fellowship (in line with organisational employment policies and practices).

When considering which funding scheme is most appropriate, we would advise reading through both schemes' assessment criteria in the first instance.